

THE AMERICAN VETERAN
EPISODE 4, PART 3

JIN BENSON, HOST: A GENERATION OF AMERICAN VETERANS HOPED FOR AND DREAMED OF A MEMORIAL THEY COULD CALL THEIR OWN. NOW IN THE HEART OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL, THEIR DREAMS HAVE BEEN REALIZED, AS MORE AND MORE OF THE GREATEST GENERATION PASS ON, A WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL WAS COMPLETED TO HONOR ALL THE VETERANS OF THAT WAR.

[A VIDEO MONTAGE OF WORLD WAR II SOLDIERS MARCHING AND FIGHTING, FOLLOWED BY A VICTORY PARADE AND CELEBRATION. VIDEO IS ACCOMPANIED BY KATE SMITH SINGING THE FOLLOWING VERSE FROM THE SONG, "GOD BLESS AMERICA"]:

KATE SMITH: "GOD BLESS AMERICA, LAND THAT I LOVE. STAND BESIDE HER, AND GUIDE HER, THROUGH THE NIGHT WITH THE LIGHT FROM ABOVE."

JAMES MCBYRDE, WORLD WAR II VETERAN: WE WAS ABOUT 150 MILES FROM NAGASAKI WHEN THEY DROPPED THE ATOMIC BOMB.

SCOTT WALLACE, REPORTER: AN ENTIRE GENERATION, THE GREATEST GENERATION, IS TOGETHER ONCE AGAIN.

GEORGE MCGINNESS, WORLD WAR II VETERAN: I WAS YOUNG, AND I THOUGHT FOR MY COUNTRY I HAD TO GO SERVE.

NORMAN ROUSE, WORLD WAR II VETERAN: AND THEN ON FEBRUARY THE 19th, WE MADE THE AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT AT IWO JIMA.

WALLACE: THEY ARE TELLING THEIR STORIES, AND THE WORLD IS LISTENING. RIGHT HERE, NESTLED BETWEEN THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL AND THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT IS A SEVEN AND A HALF ACRE MEMORIAL. AT ITS DEDICATION ON MEMORIAL DAY, 2004, THE VETERANS SHARED POIGNANT MEMORIES.

THOMAS KEYES, WORLD WAR II VETERAN: THERE WAS THREE OF US FLYING IN AN ECHELON. WE WENT AROUND THE BAY AND WERE COMING DOWN THIS ROAD. A LOT OF JAPANESE PEOPLE WERE WAVING LITTLE AMERICAN FLAGS.

ELMER TAYLOR, WORLD WAR II VETERAN: I LOST A LOT OF BUDDIES, NEIGHBORS, FRIENDS.

WALLACE: THE ARCHED PAVILIONS CELEBRATE THE VICTORIES WON IN THE ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC.

THE 4,000 SCULPTED GOLD STARS ON FREEDOM WALL COMMEMORATE THE 400,000 AMERICANS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN WORLD WAR II.

ROUSE: IT IS WONDERFUL. IT IS WAY PAST DUE. YOU KNOW, IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN BUILT 30 OR 40 YEARS AGO. BUT IT'S HERE. AND THANK GOD I'M ALIVE TO BE ABLE TO TAKE IT IN AND ENJOY IT.

BENSON: OVER 16 MILLION AMERICANS SERVED IN WORLD WAR II. GOVERNMENT ESTIMATES SHOW THAT ABOUT FOUR MILLION ARE STILL ALIVE. THERE IS AN ON-LINE REGISTRY OF WORLD WAR II VETERANS. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEARCH THE DATABASE OR ADD A LOVED ONE'S NAME, LOG ON TO WWW.WWIIMEMORIAL.COM. WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK WITH A LOOK AT HOW V.A. IS HELPING OUR NEWEST VETERANS CREATE NEW LIVES FOR THEMSELVES.

BENSON: THEY ONCE PATROLLED THE STREETS OF BAGHDAD, BUT AFTER BEING INJURED, MANY IN THE MILITARY ARE RETURNING TO A LIFE THEY NEVER PLANNED FOR. THE TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN LIFE CAN BE DIFFICULT. BUT AS NINA EDWARDS REPORTS, A NEW V.A. PROGRAM IS HELPING THESE HEROES ALONG THEIR JOURNEY.

NINA EDWARDS: FROM THE DAY HE GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL, MATT BRAIOTTA KNEW HE WANTED TO JOIN THE ARMY, PERHAPS EVEN MAKE IT HIS CAREER.

MATT BRAIOTTA, ARMY VETERAN: I ALWAYS THOUGHT THE MILITARY PROBABLY WOULD BE THE LIFE FOR ME.

EDWARDS: BUT TEN MONTHS INTO HIS DUTY IN IRAQ, A ROADSIDE BOMB SENT SHRAPNEL INTO MATT'S LEGS AND FACE, PUTTING AN END TO HIS FIVE-YEAR CAREER.

BRAIOTTA: IN THE HOSPITAL I WAS THINKING ABOUT WHAT I WAS GOING TO DO, WHERE I WAS GOING TO BE, WHAT KIND OF JOB, IF I HAD ANY TRANSFERRIBLE SKILLS. AND I DIDN'T. SO I WAS REALLY KIND OF WORRIED ABOUT THAT.

EDWARDS: THAT'S WHEN THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND JENNIFER DUNCAN STEPPED IN. TWO YEARS AGO, THIS MANAGER AT THE V.A. NOTICED MOST VETERANS IN THE V.A.'S WORKFORCE WERE AT OR NEARING RETIREMENT AGE.

JENNIFER DUNCAN, FOUNDER, VET I.T. PROGRAM: SO WE STARTED AN INTERNAL CAMPAIGN TO REFRESH OUR ORGANIZATION WITH THE NEXT GENERATION.

EDWARDS: THE NEW VET I.T. PROGRAM PAIRS UP NEWLY DISABLED VETS LIKE MATT WITH A V.A. MENTOR WHO GUIDES THEM THROUGH THEIR NEW SETTINGS.

OWEN DOLAN, MATT'S MENTOR: MAKING SURE THEY GET THE RIGHT TRAINING, GIVING THEM A PAT ON THE BACK, TELLING THEM NOT TO GET TOO WORRIED ABOUT THIS, THAT OR THE OTHER THING.

EDWARDS: ARMED WITH NEW SKILLS AND ON-THE-JOB EXPERIENCE, IN A MATTER OF MONTHS, MATT WAS HIRED FULL-TIME IN THE V.A.'S BUDGET OFFICE.

DUNCAN: I'LL THRILLED BEYOND WORDS THAT WE'RE ABLE TO HELP THESE YOUNG SERVICE MEMBERS RESTART THEIR LIVES IN NEW CAREERS WITH THE V.A.

BRAIOTTA: I LOVE IT. IT IS AWESOME. IT'S ONE OF THE GREATEST EXPERIENCES I'VE HAD. I'M IN WASHINGTON, D.C., THE NATION'S CAPITAL. I JUST ATE A HOT DOG AND A COKE IN FRONT OF THE WHITE HOUSE. I WAS LIKE, WOW, YOU CAN'T GET ANY MORE AMERICAN THAN THIS.

EDWARDS: A FULL-TIME POSITION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS IS NOT GUARANTEED. BUT THE PROGRAM DOES PROVIDE DISABLED VETS WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN ABOUT A NEW PROFESSION. THEY ALSO GET TO LEARN ABOUT THE CITY'S MASS TRANSIT SYSTEM, BUY A NEW BUSINESS SUIT AND FIND NEW HOUSING. AND IN MOST CASES, THE DISABLED VETERANS ARE ABLE TO SPLIT THE TIME THEY SPEND HERE AT THE V.A. WITH THEIR HOSPITAL, SO THAT THEY CAN CONTINUE THEIR MEDICAL TREATMENT WHILE THEY INTERN.

EDWARDS: 26-YEAR-OLD CORY McGEE IS WAITING FOR HIS MEDICAL DISCHARGE FROM THE ARMY. HE WAS INJURED FROM AN EXPLOSION WHEN SHRAPNEL BECAME LODGED NEAR HIS SPINE.

COREY MCGEE, SPEC4, U.S. ARMY: THEY TOLD ME I WOULD NEVER WALK AGAIN.

EDWARDS: BUT AFTER SURGERY AND A YEAR OF PHYSICAL THERAPY, CORY IS ABLE TO WALK.

MCGEE: WHEN I GOT HERE, I WAS A LITTLE OVERWHELMED. I WAS IN THE INFANTRY AND NOW I'M WORKING AT A DESK. IT IS A WHOLE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE.

EDWARDS: BUT HIS MENTOR, PAUL HAYDEN WHO IS A VETERAN FROM THE FIRST GULF WAR, IS COREY'S GUIDE THROUGH THIS NEW WAY OF LIFE.

PAUL HAYDEN, COREY'S MENTOR: HERE IS SOMEBODY WHO WAS GOING TO MAKE A CAREER OF THE MILITARY AND PROBABLY HADN'T REALLY GIVEN MUCH THOUGHT TO WHAT THEY WERE GOING TO DO OUTSIDE OF THE MILITARY. SO I THINK WHEN YOUR WHOLE CAREER IS THE MILITARY, MAYBE YOU DO NEED HELP SAYING THIS IS THE DIRECTION YOU NEED TO GO TO ACCOMPLISH OTHER THINGS.

EDWARDS: WHILE CORY WAITS FOR HIS MEDICAL DISCHARGE, HE'S MAKING PLANS TO HEAD TO COLLEGE IN THE FALL. AND WITH HIS EXPERIENCE IN THE V.A., HE'S DECIDED TO STUDY POLITICS.

MCGEE: I REALLY DIDN'T THINK THAT THIS WOULD BE SOMETHING I WOULD BE DOING. I THOUGHT MAYBE AFTER I GET BETTER I'LL BECOME A POLICE OFFICER OR SOMETHING ALONG THE LINES OF SECURITY. BUT TO THINK THAT I WAS GOING TO BE WORKING CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS NEVER CROSSED MY MIND.

EDWARDS: THESE ARE THE FACES OF A NEW GENERATION OF VETERANS. NOW, THEY'VE PUT DOWN THEIR RIFLES AND ARE BEGINNING A NEW JOURNEY.

BENSON: VETERANS MAKE UP ABOUT THIRTY PERCENT OF V.A.'S EMPLOYEES. BUT MANY ARE FROM THE VIETNAM WAR ERA AND NEARING RETIREMENT. JENNIFER DUNCAN, THE WOMAN WHO STARTED THIS PROGRAM, HOPES IT WILL SOON EXPAND NATIONWIDE. THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS STRIVES TO HONOR AND ASSIST THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED OUR COUNTRY SO WELL. IT IS OUR COMMITMENT TO PROVIDE THE BEST SUPPORT TO AMERICA'S VETERANS EACH AND EVERY DAY. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTACT US ABOUT THE STORIES ON THIS PROGRAM OR ANY OTHER REASON, HERE ARE A FEW WAYS TO DO SO.

TO CONTACT V.A. BY TELEPHONE, CALL 1-800-827-1000. ON THE INTERNET, GO TO [HTTP://WWW.VA.GOV](http://www.va.gov). OR VISIT YOUR NEAREST VET CENTER.

AND THAT WRAPS UP THIS EDITION OF "THE AMERICAN VETERAN." THANKS FOR JOINING US. WE'LL BE BACK NEXT MONTH WITH MORE REPORTS DESIGNED JUST FOR YOU, THE AMERICAN VETERAN. FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, I'M JIM BENSON. SEE YOU NEXT TIME.